

Fire destroyed bank building

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those days. On the lot the new brick Urie Building was built.

In 1919, First National Bank moved into ground-floor quarters of the Urie Building and Citizens State Bank (Roy Dobbs) rented the old brick bank building at Fourth and Birch from Johnson.

Both Johnson and Carmack were on the infamous "North Bank Highway" committee in 1921, responsible for planning the section of the highway between Camas and Vancouver.

In 1923, a terrible fire swept through the block of wooden stores between Clara and Burton streets, also burning to the ground the 1908 brick bank building owned by Johnson. The fire was so large that fire crews responded from Camas, Vancouver and Portland. Johnson immediately began construction of a much larger two-story brick structure on the Northeast Fourth and Burton street corner. Two months later that building was completed as well as another next to it on the Burton Street side.

Winston Johnson graduated from Camas High School in 1927 with honors. With the help of high school principal Nora Self, Winston entered the highly recommended

Mills College in Oakland, Calif., where she attained a B.A. in music at age 20. In 1931, Winston married Evert Ezra Ellis. Ellis was a YMCA secretary who later became a Methodist minister, and then was appointed vice president of the Southern California School of Theology at Claremont, Calif.

Johnson retired from the presidency of the First National Bank in 1928, after being in the banking business for 30 years. The bank's selling price was \$150,000—pretty good for a young man who started out at \$100 a month. In fact, his bank was the only bank in Clark County to withstand the "Crash of '29."

In 1931, Beatrice's mother, Katherine Bauman, passed away.

In 1932, the absence of their only daughter, and the lure of living in sunny, warm California, persuaded the Johnsons to move south. They bid farewell to their friends and moved to Los Angeles to be near Winston and Ezra. Two years later, in 1934, the Johnsons became grandparents. Winston and Ezra had a son, Donald Johnson Ellis. The couple later had two daughters—Winston Katherine (Kay) in 1938 and Susan Beatrice in 1943.

In 1934, O.F. received the sad news of his father's death. Perry Johnson had died at Dunnell, Minn., at the age of 91.

In 1935, after spending three years in Los Angeles, not only missing friends and asso-

ciates, but the town they loved as well, the Johnsons returned to Camas. Johnson came out of retirement that same year, building a uniquely designed brick store front building at 225 N.E. Fourth. He opened a real estate, loan, and insurance business which became quite successful.

R.W. Carmack died suddenly of a heart attack in 1938, after two years of failing health. It was with sadness that Johnson said goodbye for the final time to his old friend.

Johnson continued to be active in community and club affairs as a member of the Kiwanis, IOOF, Scottish Rite, Shriners, and many other local groups including the Republican Party.

The years were kind to the Johnsons. Their business interests were flourishing, and they had plenty of time to play golf, and enjoy their many friendships. Their grandson, Don Ellis, realized his grandfather's musical career dream and went on to become a composer, trumpeter, and big band leader of international fame. Their granddaughter, Winston Kay, became the owner of a computer business. And, granddaughter, Susan, followed a career as a respiratory therapist.

However, in 1963, Oscar's wife, Amelia Beatrice Johnson, died of heart failure when she was 83. Still active, though alone, O.F. Johnson chose not to live in his home on

Northeast Hayes and moved to a retirement community in Stanton, Calif.

O.F. Johnson lived 12 years beyond his lovely Beatrice, and passed away in 1975 at the age of 95. They are buried side-by-side at the Camas Cemetery.

Ezra and Winston Ellis lived in the old family home on Northeast Hayes for a few years. In 1978 their son Don Ellis died at the age of 44. Eventually, the Ellises moved back to California to be near their daughters. Winston recently sold the old real estate and drug store building to Camas Sport, and the Runyan's Jewelry Store to Paul Runyan. She still owns the Sprouse Reitz building.

O.F. Johnson will be remembered by Camas citizens as a man of tremendous vision and determination. Challenges and goals did not bother this man, they inspired him. He was a true Camas pioneer and one that will never be forgotten.

Sally Alves is a local historian. This story on the O.F. Johnson family is a condensed version of one chapter in an upcoming book by Alves. The chapter on the Johnsons will include numerous early photographs of the Johnson and Bauman families and their historic residences and buildings. In addition, it will provide the reader with a vivid, personal profile of O.F. Johnson, one of our most colorful early citizens.